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1. COUNTRY: <u>LAOS/THAILAND</u>		8. REPORT NUMBER: <u>TRANSPORT/WATERWAYS</u>			
2. SUBJECT: <u>FAR Flotilla; Lao-Thai Cooperation on Mekong (U)</u>		9. DATE OF REPORT: <u>8 March 1973</u>			
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5. PLACE AND DATE OF ACQ: <u>Vientiane, Laos</u> <u>26 February 1973</u>		13. PREPARED BY:			
6. EVALUATION: SOURCE <u>B</u> INFORMATION <u>2</u>		14. APPROVING:			
7. SOURCE: <u>Personal Observation; Photography;</u> <u>CO FAR Flotilla</u>					
15. SUMMARY:					
<p>(U) IR forwards information on status of craft and operations of Lao Flotilla. It includes information on rules of engagement for the Flotilla, and joint patrols which are being conducted by Lao and Thai naval units.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>REQUEST PHOTOS DIRECTLY FROM DC-6A ORDERED BY IR AND PHOTO LOG NUMBER</b></p>					
1. (C) <u>Status of Craft:</u>					
<p>a. Privats #010 and #011, previously in Thakhet (1724N 10448E) area, are now at Chinaimo (1754N 10237E) HQ for repair. RO's were informed that two FOM-11's have taken their place, however, numbers are not known. Privat photo, 1-G.</p> <p>b. U.S. Army LCM's #6458 and #6078 have been received, bringing total number of newer LCM's to six. These latter craft appeared to be in better overall condition than the four previous craft.</p>					
2. (C) The new floating drydock is still under construction, with estimated					
16. DISTRIBUTION BY ORIGINATOR:		17. DOWNGRADING DATA:		18. ATTACHMENT DATA:	
<p>CINCPAC (w/o encl) CINCPACFLT (w/o encl) J-2 MACTHAI (w/o encl)</p> <p>RECEIVED DS-402 MAR 20 2 42 PM '73</p>		<p>Subject to General Declassification Schedule of Executive Order 11652. Automatically Downgraded at two year intervals. Declassified on December 31, 1999.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>CONFIDENTIAL</b></p>		<p>ENCL: (1) Five 35MM negatives for exp 1G and 2G (U)</p>	

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completion about 15 March and dedication ceremony 21 March. Completion date was slowed by modification of the original plans. A barge-type bow will be added to all forward sections. The modification is expected to decrease water resistance and bank erosion. See photo 2-G.

3. (C) Rules of Engagement: RO's questioned Colonel Sinthanavong Kindavong, CO of the FAR Flotilla, on rules of engagement for his forces, previous incidents with Thai river forces, the international boundary along the Mekong, and related matters. Sinthanavong stated that no rules of engagement as such have ever been issued. No written agreement had ever been concluded with the Thais, since this could be a violation of Lao neutrality. Sinthanavong insisted, however, that his officers all understood that they were not to fire at the Thai or even to fire into Thai territory. While no written agreement existed with the Thai, there were verbal understandings. Sinthanavong referred to an "agreement" between the governors of Nakhon Phanom, Thailand (1726N 10446E) and Khammouane Province, Laos (1800N 10500E) for mutual exchanges of information and assistance.

COMMENT: Captain Dumrong Sacanandana, CO Mekong River Operations Unit (MROU), Thailand, has also alluded to this agreement in RO's presence.

The Lao River Flotilla always keeps the Thais informed on what they are doing, according to Colonel Sinthanavong. If Flotilla craft had information on smuggling or infiltration and could not apprehend in Lao territory, they would pass such information to the MROU. Sinthanavong gave as an example an instance where Lao police had asked the Flotilla to intercept suspected smugglers of M-16 rifles crossing to Thailand. The Flotilla could not intercept since the craft had crossed the middle of the river, but passed the information to the Thai side. (No information on outcome). Sinthanavong told of an incident during January, near Thakhet, when a flotilla craft was firing into Lao territory after dark. The backblast from a recoilless round had been directed near an MROU craft, and the Thais assumed they were being fired upon. The incident was cleared up once an explanation was given.

4. (C) Thai-Lao Boundary: Interestingly, Colonel Sinthanavong seems to consider the Mekong River "international" waters. That is, both the Lao and Thai have free access to the entire river, though neither can intrude on the other's land territory. Sinthanavong stated that he was briefed on this relationship by his predecessor.

COMMENT: This understanding is in concert with present day usage of the Mekong whereby Thai and Lao have free passage across the river, but it also conflicts with the Thai/Lao agreement of 1926 which set the Mekong boundary at the deep water channel (see Reference (a)).

#### 5. (C) Operations:

a. Sinthanavong discussed the recent use of the newly acquired LCM's to ferry ammunition and barbed wire from Vientiane to Luang Prabang (1953N 10208E). One hundred tons of ammunition and 20 tons of barbed wire has been shipped thus far. Three LCM's carried about 35 tons each, with 15 tons of cargo on the 4th craft. Considerable difficulty with low water had been experienced at Keng Luang rapids (unlocated, possibly 1753N 10130E). In an effort to move the craft, 300 men had been used to haul the vessels forwards. At one stage an LCM had been moved 20 centimeters in one 15 minute period. The remainder of the trip was completed without incident.

b. Sinthanavong discussed joint patrols which his forces are conducting with Thai forces. In the area of Vientiane, these patrols are conducted "nightly" and may consist of a Laotian LCVP and a Thai pontoon craft, or possibly a Lao police "dugout" operating with a Thai police "dugout" for stealthy operations. The patrols are on alert for smuggling operations. Smugglers would be fired upon to stop them if necessary. In the Southern area, Thakhet, patrols

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<p>frequently consisted of a Thai PBR and a Laotian FOM. Contact between units was normally in person, since radios were not always compatible. Each side, however, knew the others operating frequency. Lao personnel were occasionally placed aboard Thai craft. In the area between Ban Phaeng (1758N 10414E) and Ban Nam Kading (181930N 1035930E), it had been agreed that any person who failed to stop for a search was considered enemy. Radio contact between Lao forces Thakhet and Nakhon Phanom MROU HQ was maintained, and radio contact was possible between Flotilla HQ Chinaimo and MROU craft at Sri Chiangmai (175730N 1023400E) and Nong Khai (1753N 10245E), Thailand. This latter net had been arranged during talks between Sinthanavong and Admiral Sa-Ngad Chaloryoo, Commanding in Chief, Royal Thai Fleet, during Sa-Ngad's visit to the Nong Khai area in late January.</p> <p><u>COMMENTS:</u> (C) The apparent increasing contacts and joint patrols between Thai and Lao forces are encouraging to note. The "working level" officers on each side seem to understand the need for such cooperation. The Thai, for their part, probably see cooperation as a necessary adjunct to better intelligence on what may be crossing the Mekong; they hardly need the meager assistance that Flotilla craft might provide. The Lao, conversely, for prestige purposes would like to keep some hand in control of the Mekong with their limited assets. Colonel Sinthanavong asked ALUSNA if there was any possibility of acquiring PBR's such as the Thais had, in order to give his forces additional speed. He was informed that the cost of PBR's and their maintenance requirements were such that the Lao would not get PBR's. When asked if a FOM or a PBR would win in a battle between the two, Colonel Sinthanavong smiled and acknowledged that the FOM would obviously win due to steel hull versus fiber glass.</p>		(Leave Blank)
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<p style="text-align: center;"><u>PHOTO TITLING LOG</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">PHOTOS 1G THRU 2G</p> <p>ALL PHOTOS TAKEN USING LEICA M3 CAMERA USING STANDARD 50MM LENS</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>			(Leave Blank)

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